

Protecting Aquatic Lands

NORTHWEST REGION / DNR

About 2.6 million acres of Washington's aquatic lands – the shorelands, tidelands, and lands under our rivers, lakes, and all navigable waters – are owned by the residents of Washington and managed by DNR. These underwater habitats provide vital spawning and feeding areas for salmon and many other species. As the state's population grows and as shorelines are altered by development, Washington's aquatic resources suffer. DNR continues to work on reversing that trend.

Aquatic policy implementation manual provides guidance for good stewardship

For the first time in DNR history, Aquatics field staff have had a comprehensive manual to guide their decisions about the state's aquatic lands and resources. The new manual includes all relevant laws and rules, with explanatory text that explains the policies contained in those laws and regulations. The intent of this manual is to ensure the consistent application of the rules that govern state-owned aquatic lands and resources.



ANCHOR ENVIRONMENTAL

Photo top: Fidalgo Bay near Anacortes.

Photo bottom: Bellingham Bay has been selected for a pilot cleanup project.

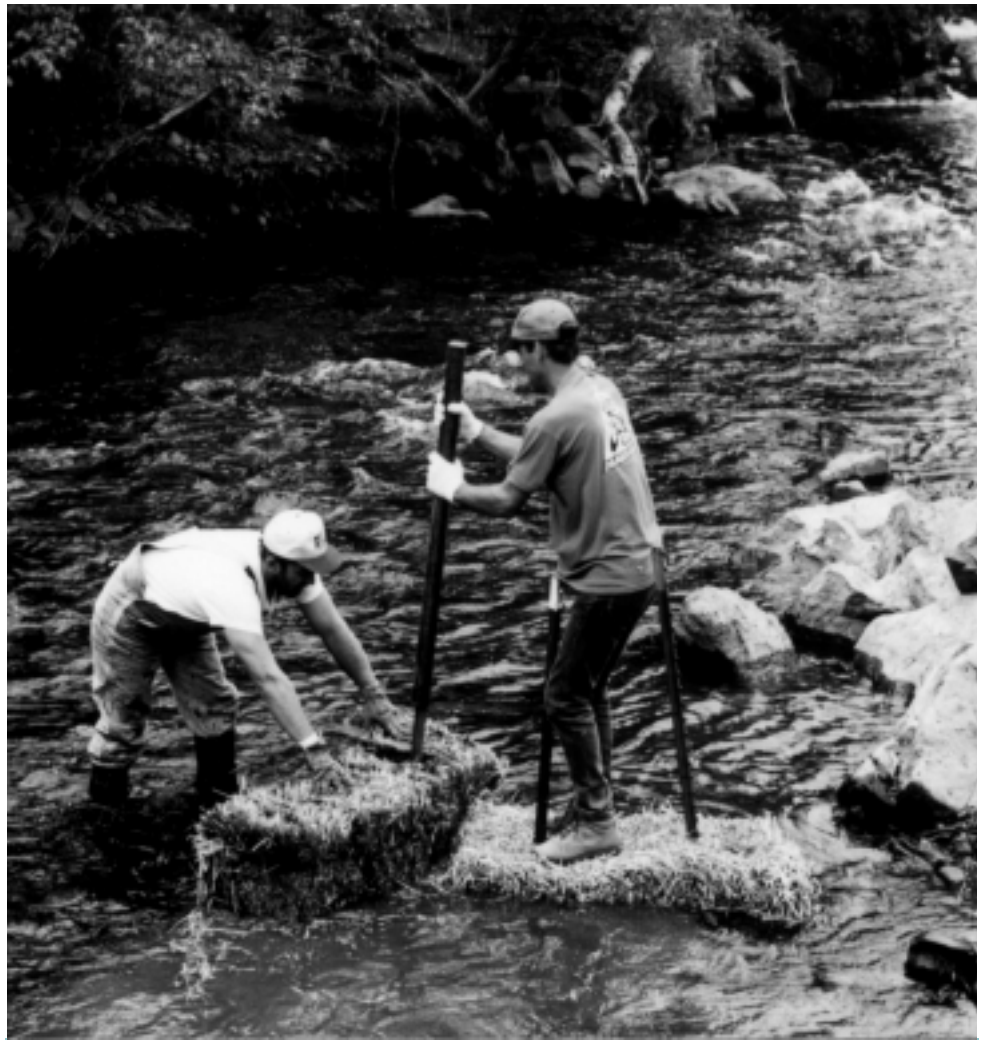
The manual is an important part of a larger change, from a focus on processing leases to protecting publicly-owned natural resources. In the past, decisions about leasing public aquatic lands were made one at a time, without regard to their cumulative impacts. The new manual directs staff to consider ecosystem health, public benefits, and long-term stewardship of finite aquatic lands when making leasing decisions.

Jobs for the Environment wins recognition for salmon protection

The DNR-managed Jobs for the Environment program was rated the state's best salmon recovery effort at a Washington Salmon Recovery Board workshop. Over its seven years, the Jobs for the Environment program has directed \$38 million in state, federal, and local funds to projects on about 2,000 sites. With technical support from the Department of Fish and Wildlife, more than 1,000 displaced timber and fisheries workers have repaired streams and habitat to benefit wild salmon. Projects have ranged from road decommissioning and in-stream habitat improvements to classifying streams for salmon habitat value. One out of five Jobs for the Environment workers continues to work in environmental fields after their project employment.

Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account funds projects to expand public access

The Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account comes from revenues generated by leases of state-owned aquatic lands or from sales of valuable aquatic commodities, such as geoducks. About 40 percent of the revenue generated is reinvested in projects that protect or rehabilitate wildlife habitat and provide public access to water. Since its creation in 1984, the granting program has funded 200 projects with \$28.5 million. Initially, grants were given mostly for creating public access, but listing of several species of salmon as threatened



JAMESTOWN S'KLALLAM TRIBE PHOTO

Displaced timber workers moved bales of hay, boulders, and trees to improve critically depressed salmon runs on the Dungeness River. The Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe received a grant through Jobs for the Environment to improve conditions and control damage on the river.

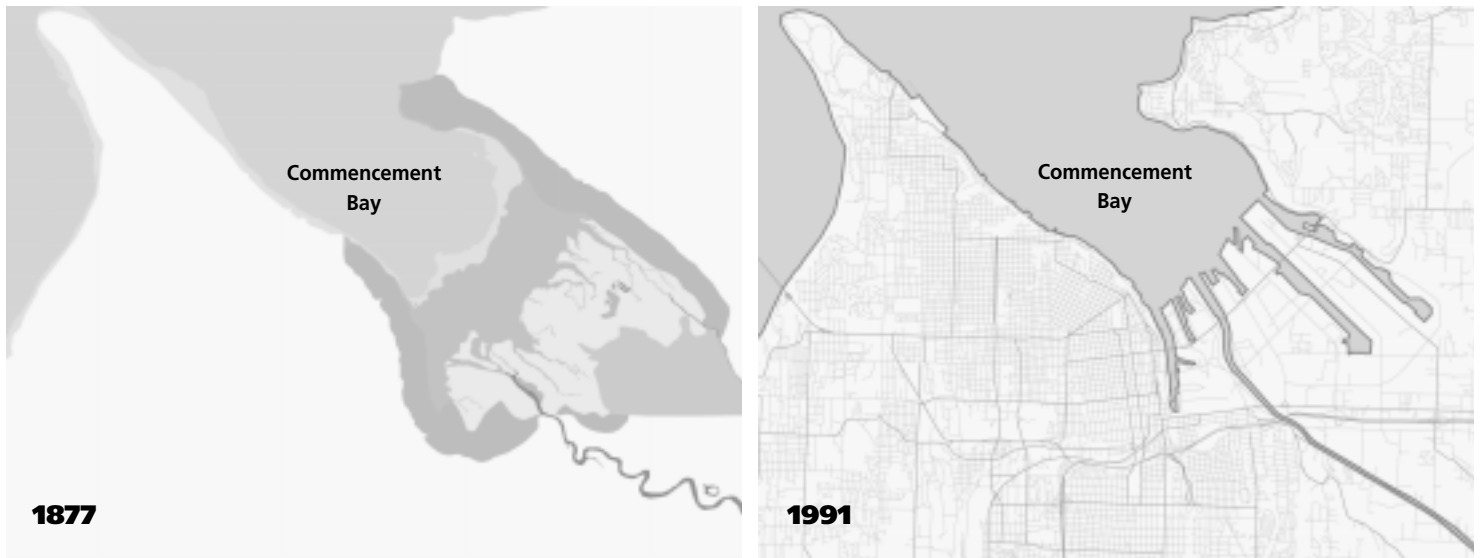
or endangered with extinction prompted the inclusion of habitat restoration as a criterion for grant applications. The grants are awarded every other year. The 1999-2001 grants included 17 projects in 11 counties across the state.

DNR promotes a different way of cleaning up polluted bays

State-owned aquatic lands managed by DNR historically have been used as depositories for dredged materials and pollution. More than 4,000 acres of these lands are being used as repositories for 4.4 million cubic yards of mud, rocks, and materials dredged from navigation

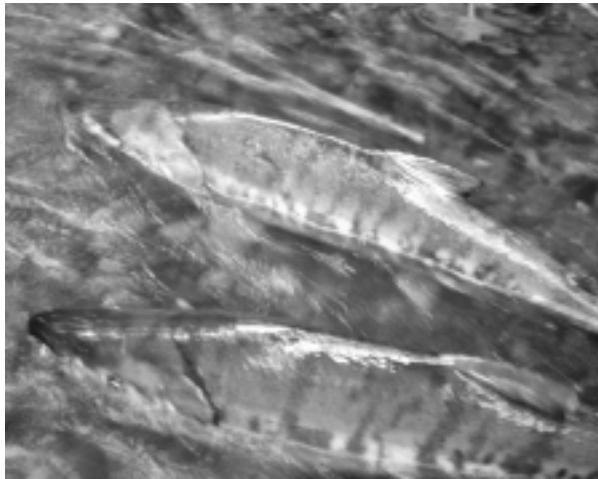
channels and ports. Another 82 acres of these lands have been committed as underwater landfills for contaminated sediments. State and federal agencies, responsible for identifying and cleaning up the worst areas of contamination, have identified 89 sites on more than 3,000 acres of Puget Sound as so badly contaminated they need to be cleaned up. Estimates place cleanup at up to \$700 million.

■ **Bellingham Bay:** Bellingham Bay is typical of many urban bays in Puget Sound, offering abundant natural resources, recreation, and a strong economic base. It also has been used for



The dramatic changes to Tacoma's Commencement Bay over the past century are typical of changes to many of Washington's urbanized bays.

boat repair, garbage disposal, and industry. Today, the bay has far less diverse and extensive habitat for fish and wildlife. Part of the bay has been selected as a pilot project for cleanup, and local, state, and federal agencies, tribes, and private industries will test alternative treatment technologies. In addition, the pilot team is working on strategies to immediately cleanup the worst of the contamination and, as part of the cleanup strategy, to develop a longer term habitat restoration plan.



JEFF CEDERHOLM / DNR

Anadromous salmon travel from streams, to estuaries, to the ocean. When they return to their home streams, like these salmon in Kennedy Creek, they need clean, cool water and gravel stream beds for spawning.

■ Commencement Bay: Before the city of Tacoma was built, Commencement Bay had wide sloping beaches, and thousands of acres of mud flats and marshes. Salmon that hatched upstream would grow in the marshes, feed along the mud flats, and gradually move out to sea to reach maturity before returning to spawn. Today, less than 4 percent of the 6,000 acres of original Puyallup River marshes and mud flats remains, and all of the original estuary channels have been dredged or filled. Commencement Bay also contains three major contaminated sites.

DNR has led a successful effort to take a bay-wide approach to these problems rather than trying to deal with each of the sites in isolation. The result is a historic, collaborative process that has brought together tribes, the City of Tacoma, state and federal agencies, local citizens, and private industry to step up to the challenge of implementing provisions of the Endangered Species Act and the Superfund law. The product has been the creation of a plan to begin rebuilding an estuarine environment that can support fish and other wildlife. Progress in the cleanup and restoration of Commencement Bay has created a new model for solving similar problems in other areas, and a new set of working relationships that will make subsequent efforts easier.